



Many years after her childhood on the Hereford Farm, Dorothy volunteers at the American Royal and recently donated many of her awards and records to the American Royal. She is shown with her awards from her showing and 4-H days.

From Hereford Farm to American Royal

Dorothy Roche grew up on the historic Hereford Farm and followed her passion for livestock to volunteer at the American Royal.

by **Bridget Beran**

Settled on a farm in the hills of Maryland sat a spyglass house that was once surrounded by red cattle with whitefaces. This home and this farm were the starting point of Dorothy Roche's love of the Hereford breed and livestock.

But the story begins more than 300 years ago when the Merryman family immigrated to the United States from Herefordshire, England, in 1714. Finding an area of Maryland they found welcoming, they named it and their new ranch after their homeland, helping to

found the town of Hereford, Md., and the Hereford Farm.

The estate was sold in 1890 and would change hands a few more times, being home to many cattle and even race horses, before the Roches would move onto 394 acres of the farm in 1942. The Grand

National Timber race was held on this farm. It was on the Hereford Farm that Dorothy Roche found her passion for agriculture and Hereford cattle.

Growing up Hereford

Dorothy said her father, B. Hamilton Roche, started her and her three brothers off with one Hereford calf and one Guernsey calf each. This gift ignited in her a love for agriculture and cattle. Nicknamed “Skippy” by her family because she would enthusiastically skip down to the beef barn and pasture from the house. She also milked 40 cows in the morning before going to school and at night. Dorothy always had a deep love of Hereford cattle.

“It was automatic because we were so young. My dad always loved Hereford cattle,” Dorothy says. “When we were little, I was always that way, get up and go.”

Though her father was raised in Baltimore, he had a love of agriculture and pursued a degree in agriculture and received his master’s. He went on to teach feeds and feeding at the University of Wisconsin until Dorothy and her twin brother, George, were 4 years



This photo of Dorothy and one of her show heifers circulated throughout many papers in the Northeast.

old. Then the family moved to the Hereford Farm. One of Dorothy’s earliest memories at the ranch came from her father and Hereford cattle.

“When my first cow was getting ready to have a calf, I was so sick that I couldn’t even get out of bed. And I was so upset because I wouldn’t be able to be there when she had the calf,” Dorothy said. “So my dad brought the calf into the house and over to my bed.”

Dorothy said he tried to instill in her and her brothers that same passion for agriculture. It certainly took with Dorothy, who jumped at every opportunity to be more involved in agriculture and cattle.

“My dad had this big Hereford bull and he was going to walk it to the beef cattle pasture. My twin brother wouldn’t have anything to do with it but I was ready,” Dorothy said. “I got up on this big Hereford bull and Dad led it to the pasture. I wasn’t afraid of anything.”

Fiercely 4-H

That fearlessness carried over into Dorothy’s 4-H career. She served as treasurer, secretary, vice president and president, not only for the girls’ 4-H club but also for the boys’ club. She took to showing cattle immediately, competing and

continued on page 230...



Spyglass houses, similar to the Hereford House, are found throughout the Northeast. This type of house is made when sections are continually added to an original house.



Dorothy won the national 4-H award for record keeping her final year in 4-H with this record book.

winning countless herdsmanship and showmanship awards at shows across the Northeast.

Her pride and joy in 4-H was her record book. Packed full of records of her awards, animals and involvement, the carefully detailed book took her to the national 4-H competition. Dorothy was the only girl even in consideration for the Meat Animal Records award, and she was selected as the overall national winner for record-keeping.

"I was in everything and I'm just realizing now at my age what an undertaking that was. But I was just that way," Dorothy said.

One of her greatest goals when she first started 4-H was showing a steer out of one of her own cows. She achieved this goal by a mile, showing 10 steers out of her own herd during her senior year of 4-H.

Being a member of 4-H was a family affair in the Roche household, and their reputation preceded them. When a young man from Turkey came to Maryland, he met the Roches and learned about the ways of American agriculture and 4-H. With four children immersed in 4-H and livestock, the Roche family was a perfect example for him to learn from.

"He wanted to get with a really good 4-H family and see the lifestyle we had and how we worked

together as family and the different activities that we were involved in," Dorothy said.

The family was also involved in the American Hereford Association (AHA), and Dorothy remembered going to Virginia with her brother George and asking Bud Snidow to go with her to look at a heifer. Snidow was working as a fieldman for the AHA at the time.

After 22 years on the Hereford Farm, Hamilton Roche suffered a stroke, and with his elder children having left the farm and only his son George left to run the operation but wishing to go to college, the Roches held a two-day dispersal sale, emptying the Hereford Farm of its Hereford cattle. Shortly after the Roches moved out, the farmhouse, a historical spyglass house, suffered a terrible fire, leaving the home in disrepair.

However, this move was nowhere near the end of Dorothy Roche's involvement in agriculture.

Finding her way back to ag

While she took a break from farm life, got married, became a mother and several years later she moved to Kansas City. She worked as a makeup artist for beauty pageants and stage performances, and eventually found her way back to the livestock industry.

While she was at work after moving to Kansas City, Mo., Dorothy ran into a woman who was the captain of the quarter horse show at the American Royal and was inspired to get back into agriculture. Dorothy began volunteering with the American Royal, and now has more than 20 years of service.

"She is incredibly enthusiastic and personable and has an amazing love and appreciation for the Hereford association and for the livestock industry," says Kristie Larson, American Royal volunteer coordinator.

Ironically, Dorothy recalled that her father used to take judging teams from the University of Wisconsin to the American Royal when she was a young child. At one of her first volunteer recognition dinners with the American Royal, she was surprised by an appearance of an old friend, Bud Snidow. While she has countless memories from her time volunteering with the American Royal, this past year has stood out.

"This last year is one of the best because I was able to volunteer 200 hours and I received the optimism award," Dorothy says.

Dorothy is one of few people to ever volunteer 200 hours in a year, and she received recognition from the American Royal for her service. Even after several surgeries on her hips and back, Dorothy's tenacious and resilient nature shines through and keeps bringing her back to livestock.

"Nothing has kept me down. I use my walker and I haven't missed the Royal yet," Dorothy said.

Growing up on the Hereford Farm stayed with Dorothy Roche throughout her entire life, from a thriving 4-H career to devoting many hours of her life to the American Royal. Even when she lived in a city, she has always found a way to keep livestock at the forefront of her life. **HW**